

MEMO

To: ABAG Executive Board
From: Paul Fassinger, ABAG Research Director
Date: September 2, 2008
Subject: Building Momentum Document and Conference

Summary

Building Momentum: Projections and Priorities 2009 completes the efforts made by ABAG and its regional partners to produce a long-term forecast for the region. It also relates that forecast to the region's Priority Development and Conservation Areas to understand the pattern of regional change. Local and regional agencies continue to look at policies to promote a variety of objectives, or performance targets. The performance targets adopted by the Executive board are evaluated as part of the forecast. While the land use pattern we see in the forecast is helpful, it does not allow us to reach the targets. Changes to land use patterns and other measures will be important as we look to meet the targets the state is currently developing for regional greenhouse gas reduction.

The document was released out at a conference held at the Metrocenter on August 28th.

Building Momentum

Building Momentum documents ABAG's biennial demographic and economic forecast for the San Francisco Bay Area. In this forecast we acknowledge the specific changes we foresee for the Bay Area over the next 25 years. An additional 1.7 million people will live here and over 1.6 million new jobs will be created. An astounding 600,000 homes will be built. We expect to have a much older population and higher energy costs. We also anticipate changes from global warming: potentially rising sea levels, a reduced snow pack, additional forest fires, and more record heat days. Building momentum represents the region's collective plans for these imminent changes.

Nearly 60 local government entities have nominated over 120 Priority Development Areas (PDAs). Together the PDAs comprise about 115,000 acres of urban and suburban land – approximately three percent of the Bay Area's total land area. Based upon the regional projections, the PDAs could accommodate over half of the Bay Area's projected housing growth to the year 2035, mostly at relatively moderate densities.

Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) are open space areas of regional significance that have broad community support and an urgent need for protection. The 98 PCAs in the Bay Area provide important agricultural, natural resource, historical, scenic, cultural, recreational, and/or ecological values and ecosystem functions.

We know that things will be different by the year 2035, but will we have achieved our objectives by then? By 2035, we have determined that we should drive less and have reduced traffic congestion. We would like cleaner air, lower greenhouse gas emissions, limited development on open space lands, and improved access to jobs and services. We also hope to sufficiently lower housing and travel costs, especially for those who can least afford to pay for those basic needs.

This year's long-term forecast demonstrates that actually achieving these objectives remains our challenge. The forecast reflects the Bay Area's collective land use and transportation investment decisions of today and how those decisions will or will not realize our goals. And for the most part, we are falling well short. The regional target for driving is to reduce travel by almost two miles per person, per day; instead driving is projected to increase by one mile per day. The climate change goal is to reduce transportation-related carbon emissions by 40,000 tons per day; instead our land use plans and investment decisions will result in a decrease of only 19,000 daily tons.

Over the next year the state will be adopting targets for regional greenhouse gas reductions by 2020 and 2035. The work that the regional agencies have collectively produced in Building Momentum is a first step in helping the region to think about these issues, and evaluating our results.

Building Momentum is about change. Whatever the nature of change, acknowledging it, planning for it, and leading through it is an essential and ongoing process.